

31 March 2003

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Text: **Senators Recommend Free Trade Agreement with New Zealand**

(19 Senators sign a letter urging President Bush to initiate New Zealand FTA) (460)

Following is the text as received from the office of Senator Charles ("Chuck") Grassley (Republican of Iowa):
(begin text)

For Immediate Release Monday, March 31, 2003

Grassley Leads Effort to Urge a Trade Agreement with New Zealand

WASHINGTON — Sen. Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Committee on Finance, and 18 other senators have sent a letter, with bipartisan support, to the President urging the administration to initiate a free trade agreement with New Zealand. The letter is in response to the administration's Nov. 13, 2002, notification of its intent to initiate a free trade agreement with Australia and its request to solicit the views of Congress on a possible free trade agreement with New Zealand.

The United States is New Zealand's second-largest trading partner next to Australia.

March 28, 2003

The Honorable George W. Bush President of the United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Bush:

We are writing to encourage you to launch negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with New Zealand.

In his notification to Congress on initiating a FTA with Australia, Ambassador Zoellick stated that he plans to solicit the views of Congress on a possible FTA with New Zealand. While withholding any judgment until the final agreement is reached, we welcome and support Ambassador Zoellick's initiative on New Zealand, and look forward to working with him during the negotiations. Given the integration of the New Zealand and Australian economies, it would be advantageous for the United States to consider negotiating FTAs with both countries.

New Zealand is a strong partner in opening markets around the world and promoting security. A United States-New Zealand FTA will encourage greater trade liberalization in the Asia-Pacific region and continue our effort to expand trade. Furthermore, New Zealand has made a major contribution to the campaign against terrorism by deploying its special forces to Afghanistan over the past year. Recently, New Zealand committed naval and air force assets in the Arabian Sea and Gulf of Oman as part of a coalition effort to police these sea routes against Al Qaeda and Taliban terrorists on the run.

Launching a United States-New Zealand FTA is a natural complement to the United States-Australia FTA and, if the agreements are comprehensive and properly structured, would benefit the economies of all three countries. We ask that you begin negotiations with New Zealand as soon as possible.

Sincerely yours,

Chuck Grassley Bill Frist Gordon Smith Peter Fitzgerald
Jon Kyl Chuck Hagel Jim Talent Thad Cochran
Maria Cantwell Richard Lugar Ron Wyden John Breaux
John McCain Don Nickles Orrin Hatch Pat Roberts
Sam Brownback Craig Thomas Zell Miller

(end text)

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